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27th Amendment may be tabled next week

• Khawaja Asif expects 'clarity on consensus' within two to three days • Justifies changes to Article 243 as defence needs 'have changed' • Latest tweaks not meant to roll back 18th Amendment, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry tells NA

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: Clarity on a consensus over the proposed 27th Constitutional Amendment is expected within two to three days, after which the legislation is likely to be tabled in parliament next week, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Wednesday.

Separately, the National Assembly was also assured that the 18th Amendment would not be rolled back through the new legislation.

KP blames Centre's 'bad decisions' for fiscal strain: Page 9

Speaking to *Geo News*, Mr Asif said consultations were underway on amendments to the law governing the armed forces as the government considers constitutional changes. He stressed that discussions on amending Article 243 were ongoing because "defence requirements have changed".

Article 243 of the Constitution provides that the federal government "shall have control and command of the armed forces" and that "the supreme command of the armed forces shall vest in the president".

Earlier, speaking to the media outside parliament, Mr Asif said he could not share details about reservations or discussions concerning the 27th Amendment.

He added that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari had every right to express his views and that the government was engaging other parties in the same spirit to seek input.

'Guesswork'

Meanwhile, responding to points raised by opposition members in the National Assembly, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry urged an end to "negative and false propaganda" and denounced attempts to make the 27th Amendment controversial based on "assumptions and guesswork" as an official draft has yet to see the light of day.

He said there was no plan to take control of provincial educational institutions or boards. "We are just talking about a uniform syllabus," he said.

The minister said no step would be taken that weakened the federation, the provinces or their relationship. "The purpose is to improve governance, bolster defence and strengthen ties between the federation and the provinces," he remarked.

He added that allies and all stakeholders would be taken on board and that matters relating to the NFC would be decided through consultation.

Regretting that the 26th Amendment, passed last year, had also been portrayed as an attack on judicial independence, he said a separate constitutional court, as proposed in the 27th Amendment, would help reduce case backlogs. He noted that establishing such a court had been agreed upon in the Charter of Democracy, signed by the PML-N and the PPP in 2006.

He stressed that constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority, not consensus, and said the spirit of the Constitution would be upheld.

Call for consensus

Earlier, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said constitutional amendments should be passed with consensus, as

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FLANKED by his mother, Indian filmmaker Mira Nair, Zohran Mamdani waves from the stage after winning the 2025 New York mayoral race.—Reuters

Zohran Mamdani wins over NYC amid Democrat sweep

Congratulations pour in from Clintons and Obama, who had previously been reluctant to endorse the socialist candidate

By Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: Zohran Mamdani, the son of South Asian immigrants who won the hearts of New Yorkers ahead of a hotly-contested mayoral race, has become the city's first Muslim mayor.

At 34, Mamdani defeated former governor Andrew Cuomo, running on a platform centered on affordable housing, social justice, and stronger public services. His grassroots campaign energised young voters and minority communities, highlighting the changing demographics and political dynamics of New York City.

According to official results, Mamdani received 1,036,051 votes, accounting for 50.4 per cent of the total votes counted.

Independent Cuomo came in second with 854,995 votes (41.6pc), while Republican Curtis Sliwa trailed with 146,137 votes (7.1pc). The total votes counted so far are 2,055,921, with roughly 90.5pc of expected votes tallied and an estimated 215,000 votes remaining.

Addressed supporters after his win, Mr Mamdani, a democratic socialist, said: "This victory belongs to the people of New York City. Together, we will build a city that works for everyone, not just the powerful few."

"A radical left earthquake just hit America. New York is the epicentre," a Virginia Republican of South Asian descent said when asked for comment at a Republican election office, after the results were announced.

The New York Times, however, saw it as the culmination of tireless work and a well-oiled election machinery.

"With each passing month, his campaign gained momentum—amassing a huge army of volunteers, maxing out on donations, and rising in the polls—until he won the Democratic primary in June," it wrote.

House of Representatives Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries told *CNN* that Democrats "have all of the momentum in the world" after the party saw major pickups in Tuesday's elections.

"Republicans woke up this morning and realised that they are no longer in a 2024 electoral environment. That's over, and they're done," the New York Democrat said.

Born in Uganda and carrying the African middle name Kwame, Mr Mamdani is also the first millennial to hold this office. His father is a Muslim, and his

Mayor Mamdani: Editorial on Page 6

Trump berates Democrats as govt shutdown becomes longest ever: Page 10

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Zardari offers to expand defence ties with Qatar

By Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari met Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani in Doha on Wednesday and offered to expand bilateral cooperation in the areas of defence and defence production between Pakistan and Qatar, a statement issued by the President's Secretariat said.

According to the statement, the Qatari emir "responded positively" to the offer and said he would instruct the relevant authorities to initiate discussions with Pakistan in this regard immediately.

The bilateral meeting was held on the sidelines of the Second World Summit for Social Development, which is being held in Qatari capital Doha from Nov 4 to 6. President Zardari is representing Pakistan at the moot.

The statement read that the Qatari leader also "expressed satisfaction at the recent Pakistan-Saudi Arabia defence agreement".

"It was a welcome and timely step that should have happened earlier," the statement quoted Mr Al-Thani as saying. He also noted Pakistan's "unique position as a country maintaining strategic ties with China, the West and the Gulf states at the same time".

On the matter of recent clashes between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Qatari emir expressed hope that the two neighbouring countries "would resolve their current issues and move beyond recent challenges".

According to the statement, Mr Al-Thani told

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What we (don't) know about proposed changes to Article 243

• Rationale offered by security circles outlines changing requirements as nature of conflict evolves • Observers see possibility of upgrading office of Chairman Joint Chiefs to enhance synergy between various military branches • Legal experts split over whether statutory 'rationalisation' even requires changes to Constitution

By Nasir Jamal in Lahore

SITUATIONER

THE debate over possible changes to Article 243 of the Constitution — as part of the planned 27th Amendment proposing major restructuring of financial, administrative and judicial systems — has once again drawn attention to the complex history of the provision, and how both political dispensations and dictatorships have used it to tilt the civil-military balance.

A closer look at the evolution of this provision shows that almost every amendment has mirrored the prevailing power struggle between elected governments and the military establishment, and the tug of war between them to control top appointments in the armed forces, including the army chief.

Article 243 governs the relationship between the prime minister (as head of the federal government) and the president (as the head of state) in relation to the control and command of the armed forces.

While the federal government has the power to command the military, the "supreme command" of the armed forces vests in the president, a phrase inserted by Gen Ziaul Haq through the Revival of the Constitution Order (RCO) of 1985, ahead of the party-less elections that year.

Changes by successive regimes

A lawyer explained that this was the first major change to the article. Zia later went further, empowering himself through the 8th Amendment to appoint the service chiefs and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee "at his discretion", sidelining the prime minister altogether.

These changes reflected a military ruler's desire to concentrate

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Pakistan to tap Loss & Damage fund despite reservations

After allocations for island states and others, countries like Pakistan will have to fight for a share of $100-150m out of $300m kitty

By Zaki Abbas

ISLAMABAD: As the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) opens for business at COP30 later this month with funds grossly insufficient to address damage caused by climate change, Pakistan is expected to submit proposals to the tune of $10-20 million to its board, despite reservations.

Three years after its operationalisation at COP27 in Egypt, the fund has about $300m in total and pledges of $700m by countries from the Global North.

Intended as a rapid response fund with its interim secretariat at the World Bank, the fund has failed to disburse even a single penny to affected countries, civil society leaders spearheading the 'Fill the Fund' campaign say.

Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik confirmed that Pakistan did not receive a single dollar from the loss and damage fund despite the catastrophic losses it has faced due to global warming.

Pakistan among nations using water 'inefficiently': Page 12

Speaking to *Dawn*, Mr Malik said the fund decided to operationalise $250m for its call for proposals at COP30 in Belem, and 50pc of this amount was exclusive to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least-Developed Countries (LDCs).

This means about $100-150m is set aside for the rest of the world, including Pakistan, he said, adding that the government was working on some projects in light of this call for proposals. He said it was too early to share details as these ideas required time to shape up, adding that proposals worth up to $20m were under consideration.

The call for proposals came after the FRLD's seventh board meeting (B7) in Manila last month, in which the board approved interim rules for its operationalisation while deferring some key decisions, leaving the fund reliant on insufficient resources.

North-South divergence

Like all other climate negotiations, the meeting was fundamentally defined by a North-South

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Bihar polls a litmus test for Modi's minority govt

• BJP holds 240 Lok Sabha seats; support of 28 MPs keeps govt afloat • Rahul hopes to repeat his UP success in Bihar with Lalu's party

By Our Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Two-stage state polls for the 243-seat Bihar assembly starting today (Thursday) are being seen as critical for the durability of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's minority government.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United) party crucially shores up the Modi government, in which the BJP stands reduced to 240 seats from the 2024 general elections, well below the halfway mark of 272 in the Lok Sabha.

Peace power: Editorial on Page 6

THE cover of a magazine depicts BJP-backed Nitish Kumar, Congress ally Tejashwi Yadav and the Jan Suraaj party's Prashant Kishor.—AFP

Mr Kumar's JD(U) with 12 MPs and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu with 16 Telugu Desam MPs hold Mr Modi's fate in their palms. Mr Modi, heading the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), has merely 21 MPs above a simple majority, and the two allies from Bihar and Andhra Pradesh together add up to 28 MPs.

The NDA is widely seen as being held together in a quid pro quo arrangement whereby Mr Modi's BJP supports the minority government of Nitish Kumar in Bihar, and he supports Mr Modi. Any setback to Mr Kumar's hold over Bihar in the assembly polls — a scenario not being ruled out by pollsters — could adversely impact Mr Modi's hold on Mr Kumar's support for him. Mr Naidu too is a hard bargainer who began his political career as a Youth Congress leader.

However, much more is making the Bihar state polls on Nov 6 and 11 so crucial for everyone in the fray.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi made a significant comeback for his party in 2024, a gain that elevated him as the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha. But the laurels were won in lockstep with allies, chiefly in Uttar Pradesh where, together with the Samajwadi Party, the Congress was able to pare down Mr Modi's numbers drastically.

Uttar Pradesh was principally responsible for the BJP's loss of majority under Mr Modi's watch. Rahul Gandhi is hoping for an encore, to upset the BJP in Bihar, this with the alliance he has formed with former chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav's son. To their advantage, Bihar is the only Hindi-speaking state where the BJP has not been able to take power from its allies.

The question is, given the dire threats and pressures on both sides, would the BJP allow the opposition to gain the leg up. Mr Gandhi not for the first time may have put the finger on the nub of the matter. He has accused the election commission of working in cahoots with and for the BJP to steal the Bihar election.

He asserts this with the support of what appears to be the election commission's fudged voters lists in recent state polls in Haryana where the Congress was unexpectedly trounced and in Maharashtra, where a Congress alliance was allegedly robbed of victory, were rigged with the connivance of the election commission.

The core of the charge concerns the excessively powerful election body's drive to carry out a nationwide Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter's list like the one that was carried out amid controversy in poll-bound Bihar. Mr Modi had changed the rules for nominating the election commissioner thereby giving himself a freehand to choose his man.

The opposition alleges that the election commission is helping the BJP by deleting voters perceived to be opposed to the BJP, primarily Muslims. The issue has galvanised opposition governments

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ON OTHER PAGES

Third round of Istanbul talks begins today

The third round of Pakistan-Afghanistan talks aimed at ending cross-border terrorism and consolidating a fragile ceasefire will begin in Istanbul today (Thursday). Delegations from both sides arrived in Istanbul on Wednesday for the two-day negotiations being hosted under the joint mediation of T rkiye and Qatar. The talks follow weeks of shuttle diplomacy after deadly border clashes last month between the two neighbours. **Page 5**

Circular debt rises to Rs1.7tr

The power sector circular debt increased by Rs79bn in the first quarter (July-September) of the current fiscal year to Rs1.693tr, which was scaled down by Rs780bn last year through capital injections and around Rs1.225tr commercial borrowing. According to a quarterly report, the new fiscal year began with Rs1.614tr compared to Rs2.467tr in the same period last year. **Page 9**